

## HOW MUCH WE ARE STRESSED?

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### Abstract:

*The nature of work is changing at whirlwind speed in every organization. These rapid global changes brought out by advancement in various field- science and technologies have caused teachers to experience stress due to their inability to always remain current and up-to-date in their areas of expertise. Causes of illness symptoms such as - migraine and sinus headaches, allergies, colds, post nasal drip, hypertension, bladder, kidney and bowel disorders, nervous, acne and weight problems. **General causes of stress** include – Organizational problems, insufficient back-up, long or unsociable hours, Poor status, pay and promotion prospects, unnecessary rituals and procedures, uncertainty and insecurity. While **specific causes of stress** include – Unclear role specification, role conflict, Unrealistically high expectations (perfectionism), Inability to influence decision making (powerlessness), frequent clashes with superiors, Isolation from colleagues' support, lack of variety, poor communication, inadequate leadership, conflicts with colleagues, inability to finish a job and fighting unnecessary battles.*

*Key Words: Stress, Coping, Cognitive Appraisal etc.*

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**Introduction:**

The nature of work is changing at whirlwind speed in every organization. These rapid global changes brought out by advancement in various field- science and technologies have caused teachers to experience stress due to their inability to always remain current and up-to-date in their areas of expertise. Causes of illness symptoms such as - migraine and sinus headaches, allergies, colds, post nasal drip, hypertension, bladder, kidney and bowel disorders, nervous, acne and weight problems. **General causes of stress** include – Organizational problems, insufficient back-up, long or unsociable hours, Poor status, pay and promotion prospects, unnecessary rituals and procedures, uncertainty and insecurity. While **specific causes of stress** include – Unclear role specification, role conflict, Unrealistically high expectations (perfectionism), Inability to influence decision making (powerlessness), frequent clashes with superiors, Isolation from colleagues' support, lack of variety, poor communication, inadequate leadership, conflicts with colleagues, inability to finish a job and fighting unnecessary battles.

**What is Stress?**

Stress is a multifaceted process, that occurs in relation to events or situations in our environment termed as stressors. i.e., the activators of stress .It are our response to events that disrupt or threaten to disrupt or threaten to disrupt our physical or psychological functioning (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Stressor may be a positive or a negative event but normally we think it is a negative one. Wide range of stimuli potentially produces stress. Wide ranges of stimuli/stressors have some common characteristics .They are generally as follows:

- i) Intense in nature
- ii) Produce overload
- iii) Individuals no longer adapt to them (if adaptable, no stress is developed)
- iv) Evoke incompatible tendencies, such as to approach or avoid some object, person or activity.

Evidences suggest that when people can predict, control or terminate an event or situation; they perceive it to be less stressful than when they feel less in its control (Karasek and Theorell, 1990; Rodin and salovey, 1989)

Unfortunately, stress is a common part of life in the last two decades- something which few of us can avoid altogether. For the same event different people have different levels of stress and/ or enjoyment. The following paragraphs elaborated different aspects of stress, it has been depicted that how an individual come in to the grip of stress and how it can be avoided.

### **Physiological Responses to stress:**

The sympathetic nervous system of our body prepares it for immediate actions. Usually these responses are brief, and the body soon returns to normal level. When we experience my stressor at random our blood pressure sores, pulse races, and we may even begin to sweat. In some cases when the stress is too high, the individual may commit suicide or even heart failure or any cardiovascular disease is possible to occur. These are parts of general pattern or reactions referred to as the fight-or -fight syndrome, a process controlled through the SNS (Sympathetic Nervous System). Generally these responses are brief and a person soon returns to the normal level.

When we are exposed to chronic sources of stress then the sequence of responses are given by our body to adapt to the stressor. Selye, 1976 termed this sequence as the General Adaption Syndrome (GAS) .Which consist of three stages.

- i) **Alarm Stage:** - The body prepares itself for immediate action; arousal of the SNS releases hormones that help to prepare our body to meet threats or dangers (Selye, 1976).If stress is prolonged then second stage begins.
- ii) **Resistance stage:** Arousal is lower than the alarm stage ,but our bodies continue to draw on resources at an above- normal rate in order to cope effectively with the stressor .If exposure to the same stressor .If exposure to the same stressor

or additional stressors continued for longer duration, this drains the body of its resources and leads to the third stage.

- iii) **Exhaustion Stage:** During this stage our capacity to resist is depleted, and our susceptibility to illness increases. In severe case of prolonged physical stress, the result may be suicide or death.

It is observed that when confronted with the same potentially stress-inducing situation, some persons experience stress, whereas others do not. Why? One reason involves individuals' cognitive appraisals. In simple terms, stress occurs only when the particular person perceives the situation as threatening to his important goals (often described as primary appraisal) and that he will be unable to cope with these dangers or demands (often described as secondary appraisal) (Croyle, 1992; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The amount of stress we experience depends on our cognitive appraisal of the event or situation, the extent to which we perceive it as threatening and our inability to cope with it. (Hingson Croyle, R.T. 1990 et al., 1990).

### Some Major causes of stress (Fig.01):

**Stressful life event:** Death in the family, injury to self or children or any other in the family, war, failure in school or at work, or unexpected problems etc.

**The Hassles of daily Life:** Daily life is filled with countries minor sources of stress that seem to make up for their relatively low intensity by their much higher frequency. It includes wide range of everyday events. Such as having too many things to do at once, shopping unwanted guests, domestic problems and concern over money.

### Environment Sources of stress:

Many environment sources like flood, earthquake, famine, heavy rains, epidemic also cause stress in an individual. Manmade disasters, such as Chernobyl accident through nuclear reactor. Bhopal gas tragedy, bomb dropping at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and many other problems like the same nature can cause stress in an individual.

**Work –related stress:** Jobs and careers are central source of stress. some of the factors producing stress in work setting are obvious ; such as sexual harassment discrimination ,extreme overload of work and unsatisfactory working conditions .Interestingly , being asked to do too little can also cause stress. Such under load produces intense feelings of boredom and these in turn can be very stressful.

**Career Related Stress:** Every individual or student in the age group of 14-18 and onwards usually have a career option in their mind .If it seems to be unachievable due to several reasons ,it causes stress .The students of class X and XII boards usually have an aim to achieve certain levels or marks say ,90 percent or 95 percent, with the thought in mind that they are going to pursue engineering or admission in a particular college or stream .If these aspirations seem to be broken .they develop stress and many of them commit suicide.

#### **How to identify whether you are having stress or not?**

Stress is difficult to measure but a stressful individual or student can be identified by the observation of his behavior patterns. A Person can identify himself or herself whether he or she is under stress? The general identifying characteristic of stress is the deviation of an individual from daily life routine. Some people thrive on a busy lifestyle and are able to cope well with life crises .other people feel tensed or stressed by slightest deviation from their set daily routine. Levels of stress may increase or decrease depending upon varying changes in the environment of the individual. Following are the indications of a stress among the students:

- Not being able to sleep properly due to worries going through your mind.
- Showing impatient or irritable at minor day- today problems.
- Not being able to concentrate at study due to many things going through mind.
- Being unable to make decisions like what to study ,when to study ,how to study ,how to face test.
- Drinking or smoking more.
- Not enjoying food so much .Reduced daily diet.
- Loss of appetite.

- Being unable to relax and always feeling that some things needs to be done.
- Felling tense. Sometimes this includes a 'knot' in the stomach or feeling sweaty with a dry mouth or a thumping heart.
- Low output of study as compared to the previous level of attachments.
- You want to keep calm, quite and do not want to interact more with others even with your family members.

### How stress can be avoided?

Following is a list of suggestions that may be useful to avoid and combat stress.

#### Try to create a stress list

You should try creating a 'stress list'. Try keeping a note book over a few week or so, and list the times ,places ,situations and people that make you worried ,add to your anxiety and aggravate your stress levels .In the process a pattern may emerge .Once you have identified any typical or regular causes of stress ,following two things may be done help yourself

- If you discuss this with a close friend or family member. It may help them and you to be aware of the reasons why you are felling stressed. Simply talking it through may help.
- Secondly, these situations can be used as 'cues' to relax .you can use simple relaxation techniques (See below) when a stressful situation occurs or is anticipated.

Try simple relaxation techniques.

#### Deep breathing:

This means taking a long, slow breath in and very slowly breathes out .If you do this a few times on regular basis, and concentrate fully on breathing; you may find it quite relaxing.



Muscular tensing and stretching: Try twisting your neck around each way as far as it is comfortable and then relax. Try fully tensing your shoulders and back muscles for several seconds and then relax completely.

Try practicing these simple techniques when you are relaxed and then use them routinely when you come across my stressful situation.

### **Positive Relaxation:**

Set specific times aside to positively relax. Don't just let relaxation happens or not happen' at the mercy of study, work, family, teacher etc. Plan it and look forward to do it .This may vary from people to people .Some prefer to take a long bath, some a quiet scroll ,some sitting and just listening to a piece of music, etc.

You can do anything which makes you relaxed happy and energized you for further study. These times are not wasteful and you should not feel guilty about not 'getting on with things' they can be times of reflection and putting life back in perspective. You may set time aside for a relaxation programmed such as meditation or muscular exercise .You can also buy relaxation tapes to help you learn to relax.

### **Time out :**

- Try to allow several times a day to stop and take some time out. For example, getting up 15-20 minutes earlier than you need to be a good start. You can use this time to think about and plan the coming day and to prepare for the day's event unrushed. You should take regular break in study one should relax at least for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Take a regular and proper lunch break. Preferably and proper lunch break. Preferably away from study room. Don't study over lunch; instead enjoy food and people around you.
- Once or twice a week, try to plan some time just to be alone and unobtainable ' .For example , a gentle stroll and a sit in the park often helps to break out of life's hustle and bustle.

### **Exercise:**

It has been experienced by people that a regular exercise reduces their level of stress.(It also keeps you fit and healthy and helps to prevent cardiovascular diseases.) Any exercise is good but try to plan at least 30 minutes of exercise on at least 5 days a week. A brisk morning walk not used to exercise .It also improve sleeping lessens.

**Drugs stimulators, smoking and alcohol:**

Never try these things. They may reduce your stress for a while but they are silent killers. They are more dangerous than the stress itself.

**Hobbies:**

Many people find that a hobby which has no deadlines, no pressure and which can be picked up or left easily takes the mind of stress. For example: sports, knitting, music, model making, puzzles, and reading for pleasure. Try to develop good hobbies.

**Treatment:**

If it seems that the level of stress or anxiety has become severe or it is difficult to cope with, see a doctor. Further treatments such as anxiety management counseling, other therapies or medication may be appropriate.

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